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**REMARKS BY
U.S. AMBASSADOR MARCIA BERNICAT AT THE
OPENING OF “SYMPHONY OF NEEDLE WORK”
TEXTILE EXHIBITION**

**DHAKA
June 16, 2015**

Distinguished guests, colleagues, and friends:

Assalamualaikum, nomoshkar. Shubho shondha.

I am so pleased that my first visit to the EMK Center is to join you for this wonderful Symphony of Needle Work Exhibition -- an exhibition that not only speaks to the beautiful crafts and textiles produced right here in Bangladesh, but also speaks to a very rich aspect of Bangladeshi tradition. A tradition to be preserved, protected, promoted and passed on to following generations.

I am impressed by the plethora of colors and designs on display here at our EMK Center, truly reflective of beautiful and vibrant Bangladesh, and reflective of this country's rich pool of talent.

It was the great American poet, Oliver Wendell Holmes who once said, “Take your needle, my child, and work at your pattern; and it will come out a rose by and by. Life is like that -- one stitch at a time taken patiently” creates a pattern that produces a unique embroidery. And that unique embroidery slowly becomes a life's tapestry.

Lipi, your story can be summed up in Holmes' poetry. One stitch at a time, you worked tirelessly and passionately to make Bibiana among one of the top local ethnic fashion boutiques in Bangladesh. This took patience, sacrifice and enduring creativity, and I greatly admire such dedication.

We can draw parallels between the patience and skills on display here to learning how delaying gratification can lead to future gains.

Through your example, there is much to be learned about design-led innovation; not only in textiles, but in ways we create a sense of purpose in our own lives. Design-led innovation can open doors that were once closed and create opportunities that did not exist before.

That is exactly what you did more than 14 years ago when you set out to launch an extraordinary experiment and revolutionary idea. You have proven that textiles are not only

fashionable and a symbol of Bangladesh's rich culture, but they can also uplift women through the wonderful art of handicraft making combined with the entrepreneurial spirit.

This is truly a Bangladesh success story. A story that needs to be told. A story that needs to be heard. A story that depicts Bangladesh. And a story that can help empower women all over the world.

This art form speaks to the resilience of women and the empowerment of women. It unleashes the spirit, skills, ideas and entrepreneurial drive of women ... women, who make up half the population of Bangladesh.

Your presence here at the EMK Center sends a strong message to the Bangladeshi community and beyond about our shared commitment to building a more prosperous Bangladesh through the empowerment of women while promoting Bangladesh's cultural heritage.

Symphony of Needle Work is art on display that simultaneously highlights the role women are contributing in building a middle income Bangladesh.

We support a Bangladesh where women thrive and are valued in all sectors. When women succeed, Bangladesh succeeds.

The U.S. Embassy with many different Bangladesh partners are working together in different economic and social development programs designed to expand the role of women as political, business, and community leaders.

We regularly engage with women leaders in order to hear their voices, help empower them, and improve our ability to address women's issues as a whole. Symphony to Needle Work is a strong example of our shared mission to bring women-led innovation to the forefront.

With the opening of this exhibition here at the renowned EMK Center, we have created a platform for women like Lipi to be recognized as leaders, change agents, entrepreneurs, and cultural ambassadors.

Lipi, I am so pleased that you represented Bangladesh on an International Visitor Leadership Program to the United States. And I am equally pleased that we have the EMK Center platform to celebrate this important art form as part of our year-long recognition of the 70th anniversary of the IVLP exchange program, one of the U.S Department of State's premier public diplomacy programs.

This evening we celebrate not only the art of needlework, but also Lipi's vision of preserving women's enduring contribution to society in creative ways...one stitch at a time.

Please, everyone, let's enjoy the exhibit! Thank you.

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**As prepared for delivery*

GR/2015